1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2



the dhows leave the banks. These men wander through the fleet in their own boats (usually launches) always trying to get to a first quality pearl before the other brokers hear of it, and always hoping that the *nakhoda* will not recognize its value. The broker's paraphenalia consists of a magnifying glass, a small hand balance, weights, and a set of brass screens for grading the pearls. When pearls are sold on the banks they are ceremoniously transferred from the captain's red bunting to the broker's.

Regardless of where they are sold, the majority of the pearls go to Bombay, and from Bombay eventually to Paris, the world's pearl emporium. Pearls are usually shipped to Bombay by air. The reason is simple: Usury and insurance are prohibited by the Quran. If the pearls were shipped to India by Arab dhow or steamer through an Arab agent, there could be no insurance on the consignment. However, if the pearls are shipped via Trans World Airline or British Overseas Airlines Corporation, the pearls can be heavily insured. Thus, the Arabs use a Western agency to get around the Quranic prohibition. In Bombay, Indian workers skillfully pierce the pearls with fine bow-driven drills and string them on silk, graded according to color and size. The pearls are sold to European dealers in bunches consisting of a number of strings and generally known as "Bombay bunches."

When the season has ended and the pearls are sold, the captain deducts the cost of the food and provisions. What is left represents the profit. Of this the owner of the dhow gets one-half; of the remainder each diver and each attendant gets one share and the captain two. Most of the dhows leaving Saudi Arabian ports are small (not over 40 feet) with small crews—usually something like 6 divers, 4 attendants, and a captain. Thus, each diver and attendant would get one twenty-fourth (about 4 percent) of the profits, and the captain would get one twelfth (about 8 percent). The pearling dhows operating out of Bahrein and Kuwait are generally much larger than the Saudi Arabian dhows, and may have crews of 40 or more. The profits of these craft are split in much the same way as the profits on smaller dhows, but the captain gets more shares with these larger crews than he does with the smaller.

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1



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his vessel pays practically no port dues. His dates can therefore be warehoused in the dhow, until the market can easily absorb them.

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The dhow trade is "native" trade, a stubborn plant which has been growing a long, long time. Nearly all the cargoes carried in dhows are for the native bazaars, and almost never for European account. Much of the cargoes consists of goods which the dhow captain himself, or some merchant or merchants travelling with him, sells for his own profit. The dhow is a peddler, as well as a carrier; a storehouse, as well as a ship; a means of livelihood to travelling merchants, as well as to her crew proper. Basra dates, though the most important outward cargo,[1] are only one source of revenue: there are a host of others, not necessarily always legitimate.

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Kuwaiti owners of date plantations on the nearby Basra river play a considerable part in the financing of deep-sea dhows, though in most cases the captains, called *nakhodas*, are at least the nominal owners. It suits the merchants well that the *nakhodas* should regard themselves as the owners, for this provides them with a cheap form of insurance. If the dhow be lost it is the *nakhoda's* loss, and not the merchant's, for the poor captain must pay back not only the value of the dhow but the advance of freight given him to finance his voyage. Since Islam forbids all forms of ordinary insurance, this arrangement is to the merchant's liking. The *nakhodas* must accept it, for in most cases there is no other way by which they can acquire a big dhow.

In Kuwait, immediately prior to the outbreak of World War II, there was beginning to be some restiveness about this, and an association of the *nakhodas* had the temerity to issue its demands upon the merchants. These included payment of demurrage when unduly delayed at the loading berths in Basra (a dhow might be kept for weeks waiting for her cargo), a sliding scale of freights for different ports instead of the customary flat rate of 1.5 or 2 rupees a package regardless of destination, liability for the return of advances to cease with the loss of the ship, two competent officers for every seagoing dhow, and so forth. The demands represente

[1] Crew requirements and the very measurements of the dhows themselves are reckoned in terms of dates. A tonnage to each 100 packages is the general rule, in Kuwait, and a dhow is spoken of there as having a capacity for 2,000 packages of dates, rather than as being of 100 tons burden.

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a bare minimun, surely, and no more than a nakhoda's right, but the merchants' answer was that if the nakhodas could make new rules, so also could they; and they had the real power. I do not think the attempt of the nakhodas got them very far.

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While the dates are generally carried both to India and East Africa on a freight basis, nearly all other cargo is bought to the ship's own account and peddled to best advantage. The merchants have a substantial share in the dhow's earnings, apart from the sailor's own ventures, which are limited to what they can stow in a sea chest on the poop. As far as I was able to discover -- and I was more than twelve months sailing in deep-sea dhows -- the freight from the dates, on the typical African voyage, is used to finance a cargo of salt from Aden and to purchase odds and ends which might earn a profit in the bazaars of the Benadir coast and Kenya Colony. At the same time, the dhow carries all the passengers she can prevail upon to make a voyage, anywhere, for the Arab of Oman, and the Hadhramaut in particular, is an inveterate wanderer, and every dhow is a passenger vessel by the mere possession of deck enough to lie upon.

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The salt is sold in the best market that offers between the Hadhramaut coast and Zanzibar. At the same time, the nakhoda does what trading he can in anything which he knows, from past experience, will command a market. The average dhow never leaves the Gulf without at least some carpets, allegedly Persian but generally of either Italian or English origin, which are used both as trade and as bribes. Cooking stones, ghee, live sheep, cows, sacks of rice and flour, dried fish, haberdashery of all sorts, brassware, cheap enamelware, Arab confectionery -- all these may be aboard, either as ship's ventures or as the crew's, generally the latter.

Every man of the crew concentrates on goods which can be bought cheaply in the free port of Aden, adulterated if possible in transit, and sold to the Somali or Swahili shopkeepers whose little stores abound in every port along the coast of East Africa, from Haifun in the north (which the Italians called Dante) to Mikindani in the south, which is about as far south as the Arabs sail in these days. Only Indian dhows go further, to Madagascar and the Comorin Islands. Gaily coloured turbans of the correct style